

Protecting our Veterans' Memories Act

Rep. Andy Kim, Rep. Kaiali'i Kahele

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration maintains 155 national cemeteries in 42 states and Puerto Rico, as well as 34 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Many states have established state veteran cemeteries, where eligibility is similar to VA national cemeteries but may include residency requirements. These cemeteries serve as the final resting place not only for those who bravely served our country, but also for their family members who sacrificed alongside them.

While national veteran cemeteries receive full reimbursement from the federal government for the cost of spouse and dependent burials, state departments receive no federal support for spouses and dependents. To provide additional assistance to state veteran cemeteries, the Protecting our Veterans' Memories Act would provide states a reimbursement of \$525, a portion of the full cost, for the burials of veteran spouses and dependents in state-run cemeteries.

The Issue:

At both the federal and state levels, Departments of Veterans Affairs manage veteran cemeteries to honor the sacrifices of our servicemembers and their families. Managed by separate levels of government, national and state veteran cemeteries receive different treatment when it comes to reimbursement for the costs of funerals and burials for those who have served our country.

Today, while national veteran cemeteries receive full reimbursement from the federal government for the burial of veterans' spouses and dependents, state-run veteran cemeteries receive no compensation. This policy leaves states with full responsibility for paying these costs, leaving them with fewer resources to invest in cemetery maintenance, Veterans Service Offices, veteran outreach, and other essential services for veterans.

The Solution:

Veterans and their families deserve the same respect and care, no matter where they are buried. The Protecting our Veterans' Memories Act would provide additional assistance to state-run veteran cemeteries by providing state Departments of Veterans Affairs with partial reimbursement for the costs associated with the funerals and burials of veterans' spouses and dependents. The federal government currently reimburses states \$750 for the costs associated with funeral and burial services for veterans. The Protecting our Veterans' Memories Act would provide \$525 in reimbursement for veterans' spouses and dependents.